1:Wilson E-5(1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngondo FN17
Nyakyusa

23f 47k find the cleaning of byres in which many cattle are stalled, very arduous. A pagan who has many cattle always has more than one wife.

Thus, herding together was traditionally, and still is, one of the main common activities of neighbours in a village; most cattle are herded with those of neighbours, but there is a measure of co-operation with relatives and personal friends of other villages. It is likely that the practice of placing cattle with friends of other villages is becoming more common.

c. *Hunting and fishing*

22d 22f 24g 47k From the point of view of village co-operation, hunting and fishing are relatively unimportant, for, in the first place, game and fish provide the Nyakyusa with prized foods to eat as relish with the staple bananas, roots, and cereals, rather than with main items of diet; and secondly, hunting and fishing are not primarily village enterprises.

22k Most fishing is done by men, individually, each keeping his own catch; but groups of herd-boys or young men sometimes co-operate to divert a branch of a stream temporarily, so that they may tickle the fish stranded in the shallow pools. They choose a place where a stream divides naturally, and block one channel with stones; but such enterprises are on a small scale. Periodically however, when fish were plentiful, communal fishing was organized during the dry season. The seeds of a certain legume, grown for the purpose, were thrown into the river to stupefy the fish. Men, women, and children waited some way down the stream with hand-nets, and when, an hour or two after the poison had been put in, the fish began to float down stupefied, they were easily netted. The poisoning was organized by the chief and village headmen and all the villages of the chiefdom participated, as well as those from neighbouring chiefdoms, whose chiefs were on good terms. Friends naturally went together, but the various villages did not act as separate units as they do in a communal hunt. Communal fishing never occurred regularly, for if fish were scarce the chief might forbid it for a number of years, and it is now rare, since poisoning the rivers has been forbidden by the Administration. We heard of only one such fishing during our stay in Nyakyusa country.

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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223 which the birds settle on the branches and are skilfully caught. The other method is to throw dust in the air, where birds are numerous, just after the young begin to leave the nests. The birds, "thinking it is rain," settle on the ground and are easily caught.

224 *Fishing.*—Fishing remains an important part of the year's work for those living near river or lake. For river fishing, huts are built in the vicinity of the place where the traps are to be set, for the fishers live there as long as the season lasts. Ceremonies similar to those observed before the hunters set out for the bush, must be performed. Sometime in May, when the river is in flood, the chief fisher of the Mbaka dreams of fish, a sign that the time has come to begin the year's work. A great quantity of *unkonda*, fish poison, is prepared, each fisher, and there may be as many as fifty, preparing his own. When all are ready, led by the chief fisher, they go to the water, and trample the poison leaves into the bottom of the river. The poison sickens the fish, which are then easily caught in the traps which are set for them with the mouth opening upstream. As soon as all the traps are set, the men lie down on their backs on the bank, and proceed to invoke the aid of sympathetic magic. They open and close their mouths, gasp, in imitation of dying fish. The probability of a good season is greatly enhanced by this process, which, though omitted now by many, is still widely followed.

The traps are laid in rows right across the river, and are in the form of immense baskets with gradually

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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narrowing mouths, so arranged that when a fish is once in, it cannot get out again. Others are open above, so that leaping fish fall into them, and cannot escape. In the smaller rivers weirs or dams are formed, and the water diverted, with much labour, into another channel, in which the traps can more easily be set; this is the case especially in streams with stony bottoms. Fish spears are used, either for thrusting at random in the water, when fish are plentiful, or for stalking individual fishes. The spear is formed with a long thin shaft, and small blades with two or three spikes. When a fish is caught, it is pulled off the whole length of the shaft, for the spikes would tear the flesh if it were taken off at the blade end. 226.

Fish hooks are mostly pre-European, and barbless, though some are now made with barbs. The bait is fish, flesh, potatoes or bean mash, which many kinds of fish are said to take readily. The line as a rule is very long, perhaps as much as a hundred yards, and is supported by small sticks placed upright at intervals in the ground. Where crocodiles are numerous, the bait is thrown far out into the water, and the fisher retires to a place of safety, where he awaits the pull which indicates a fish at his hook. If he would secure it he must be smart, for the barbless hook will not hold it long. This sport is indulged in mostly at night, a fire being kindled to attract the fish; but as crocodiles and serpents may also be attracted, it is supposed to be somewhat dangerous, and to call for constant watchfulness.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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226 Women have dipping baskets without top or bottom, which they dip at random, and when fish is plentiful they get a good catch. Boys prepare bunches of worms fastened to a cord and thrown into the stream. Sitting down on the banks, they sing or whistle to attract the fish. A sharp pull when a nibble is felt lands the unwary fish.

Nets large and small are in use on the lake. The larger are furnished with stone sinkers and wood floats, and are operated very much as in Europe, a canoe feeding out the net, which is hauled in from both ends with the catch enclosed. The smaller nets are sometimes operated by one man, heavier ones requiring two; and there are tiny dipping nets, of which a man will sometimes have one in each hand. Nets must be treated with medicine before being used. The Abakisi, a small tribe living at Matema near the north end of the lake, stalk the fish under water, and are said to catch all kinds in this way.

226 782 In many places the first fish caught is not sent to the village, but is cooked and given to little children to eat, the bones being thrown back into the water. The idea is that this is one way of giving the spirits their portion; I have already pointed out that beer offered to the spirits is in some families poured into the hands of children, who drink it, though adults may not do so. And flesh offered at the family place of prayer (the *ikiyinja*) is similarly given next day to children, who are told that it is the gift of their grandfather.

251 The remainder of the catch is dried over a slow

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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501 fearsome thing. It is sometimes hollowed out, by
burning and hewing, miles from the shore, even up
in the hills, and has to be dragged down by long-
stretching teams, who will be entertained to a beer
feast when the canoe is launched. The tree selected
is not necessarily a straight one. A bend does not
seem to matter, and some amazing things are afloat
on the lake, and in regular use. But the Konde are
not sailors, and compared, for example, with the
Atongs, half-way down the lake, the number of
•226 canoes is very small indeed. The Konde catch their
fish by setting lines of traps across the rivers; only
a few bolder spirits venture out on the lake with
nets.

505 Many years ago I was travelling with a team of hill-
men, and not knowing the men I had to deal with, I
crossed a deep river, swarming with crocodiles, by the
first canoe that offered, leaving the men to follow, as
I had no doubt they would readily do. But I had
miscalculated. Not a man would enter the canoe,
nor had the jeers of the villagers any effect whatever
upon them. Finally I called for the canoe to ferry
me back, with the intention of driving my reluctant
highlanders, willy nilly, into it; but the threat was
sufficient, and four or five ventured, planting their
feet in the bottom, and stooping down to hold on to
the sides with their hands. Half-way over, the canoe
capsized, the men struggled, blowing and shouting,
to my side of the river, and one or two villagers
plunged in to retrieve my bed which was floating
gracefully down the stream. The rest of my carriers,

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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and the river banks. Large nets, with wide or fine mesh, are made with floats and sinkers attached, pulled at both ends by means of ropes. *Ilisimbilo* is a net used only at night, when the water is beaten with flat sticks to drive the fish into it. There are also small hand nets, and special nets made for catching special kinds of fish.

Weaving is a very ancient craft, and may have begun with the weaving of mats, which are at present made from banana fibre, grass, reeds, palm leaf, and the tough outer skin of palms. These mats are used for sleeping on, laying out grain to dry in the sun, straining pounded maize, and a dozen other uses. Long grass or palm leaf mats are used by Europeans as carpets; and there is a good trade in palm leaf bags for carrying rice, and grass mats for packing cotton for the European market.

Very good cloth is still woven in the Igale district by the Safwa. The art was formerly universal among the Konde, but has now died out before inferior trade goods. At Igale the cloth is either plain white, or mixed black and white, though dyes for other colours are known. These cloths make excellent bath towels, and a trade could be developed if encouragement were given. Bark-cloth is very extensively made, and there has been a recent revival of this industry consequent on the exorbitant price of European goods since the war. Women wear the long *ilyabi* or loin cloth of bark, and nothing else; but, especially in the Igale district, complete suits are now made for men, wonderfully cut and sewn shorts and jackets, and

J. Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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memories and yarns, eats food made from the flour of a pumpkin, which destroys the virtues of his housing medicines, and at the same time takes away all probability of his death being the prolonged weariness it would otherwise be.

Fishing nets are drugged to ensure a good catch; but here again caution must be exercised, for a very great catch is an omen of a very large family, which is not always an ambition held by the Konde people.

The mother who has just given birth to a child must not cook food, nor may she warm herself at the common fire; a small fire is kindled for her at which she sits by herself; and when the child goes out of the house for the first time a medicine is put into its mouth to guard it against the ills of the world into which it has come.

Christians do none of these things; but Christians are not as other people. They have passed away from the fear of spirits and from the dread of a world in which anything may happen at any moment; and the fact that they escape the consequences of failure to follow custom is having its effect on the common people, many of whom are cautiously experimenting to see whether they too may live a freer and more unshadowed life; but the belief in the protective powers of such things as I have been describing dies hard.

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

according to the *Bell Report*. Cattle and hides are exported to Tanganyika.[1] The Nyamwanga herds were reduced, partly by epidemic raids, and partly by rinderpest.[2]

Domestic Architecture

Ngonde homesteads are famous in Nyasaland for their peculiar style and neatness of execution. They are made of bamboos, specially grown for the purpose. They are oblong, with the ends slightly tapering upwards so that they present a ship-like appearance. The huts are erected in two lines facing each other, at a distance of about 30 yards. This service street is kept scrupulously clean.[3] The *Nyakusa* live in round or long huts of bamboo or grass.[4] *Kinga* homesteads are scattered; they live in round huts of bamboo and straw.[5] The *Iwa* formerly lived in large stockaded villages, but these are now broken up.[6]

Specialization and Trade

The Ngonde were accomplished iron-workers; iron was dug, smelted, and made into hoes and spears.[7] The Iwa were formerly noted as iron-workers. Both they and the Nyamwanga grow tobacco on a large scale.[8]

A rough kind of cloth was made on native looms. The Ngonde made hollowed canoes, but were not good sailors. In fishing they used poisons, hooks, nets, and traps. Pottery and basket-making were carried on.[9]

The Ngonde were the most civilized of this cluster of tribes, owing to their closer contact with Arab and Swahili traders who used the lake as a waterway.[10] The Nyamwanga also had opportunities of contact with Arab and Swahili traders at the south end of Lake Tanganyika,[11] but information about the effect of this on their economic life is lacking. By comparison with the Ngonde the Nyakyusa were isolated from contact with the outside world,[12] and this is probably true of the other tribes of the group. Among the Ngonde, in spite of the political hierarchy and central religious authority of Kyungu, economic links between separate local groups were few. The ivory trade was a source of wealth for the Kyungu and for the nobles of Ngonde at Mbande, but its benefits had a strictly limited effect on the rest of the people. The economic links between the capital and the chiefdoms followed the lines of the political system. The income of Kyungu in slaves and cattle depended on the judicial process and on warfare. He had a semi-monopoly of the ivory of the country (the right tusk of every elephant killed was his). His expenditure consisted of entertainment for all important visitors to the capital, and gifts of cloths, obtained through the ivory trade, to nobles and chiefs. The first Kyungu gave head-cloths to the indigenous rulers, who, in accepting them, accepted his overlordship, and the practice was continued every time a new chief or territorial noble succeeded to office. The nobles of Ngonde got cloth every time the Arab traders came. Chiefs bringing food to Mbande, the capital, were

[1] *Bell Report*, pp. 100–3; Aplin, 1931.
[2] Kerr-Cross, 1894; Murray, 1930, pp. 210–11.
[3] Ibid., p. 64.
[4] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 148–9; Kerr-Cross, 1894, p. 189.
[5] Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p. 12.
[6] Wilson, J., 1930, p. 44.
[7] Cotterell, 1914, p. 44.
[8] Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p. 12.
[9] *Handbook of German East Africa*, p. 68.
[10] Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p. 12.
[11] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 148, 149, 151–2.
[12] Ibid., p. 1938, p. 13.

14:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 F767 Ngonde F767
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but I was astonished that this trap was erected relatively near to my tent on the border of the village of Katumbe.

6. *Fishing.* Fishing is a much more common practice with the Nyakyusa than hunting. The old-established custom of poisoning fish in their smaller rivers is still widely used. The poison is derived from the **wakevala** shrub. Its branches and leaves are broken off, reduced to small pieces between stones and then packed in a covering of grass to resemble a long cigar about 1 metre in length and 25 cm in width. The bundles prepared in such a manner are fixed between two rows of stones placed across the river for this purpose. The poison gradually diffuses into the water, which takes on a green colour. The fish are soon affected by the poison and rise to the surface with gaping mouths. They are then easily caught with a scoop made from bamboo. The open end of a piece of bamboo is split into several sections and the splinters are bent apart and tied together with raffia to form a sort of funnel[1]. The fish are strung through their gills on small pliable sticks and roasted at home over a fire. All people are allowed to join in this fishing which to them is always a festive occasion in the cooler season.

Fishing in broader and deeper rivers, such as the lower Kiwira, is done by means of large fish-traps. They are made and repaired by men on the banks of the river. The traps are attached to poles rammed into the bed and almost invariably boats trying to reach the Lake Nyassa get struck on submerged poles. These large fish-traps strung across the river form quite an impressive sight. Looking up-stream, they look like the bows of little ships standing in a row.

7. *Preparing food.* With the Nyakusa the preparation of food is so exclusively the task of the women, that R. Thurnwald is quite correct when says (Black and White in East Africa, London 1935, p. 137): "Menfolk starve if there are no women to prepare their meals". There is thus a very strong division of labour between the sexes, also noticable in the carrying of loads. For a young man to carry the load of an old woman or his sweetheart, whom perchance he might meet on the road, would be a grave violation of a rigid custom.

As the preparation of the food is the women's duty, also the grinding *(ukutika)* of the corn in a mortar *(ikituli)* with a pestle *(ikitiro)* which is the exclusive task of the female sex. The wife is always the first to rise in the morning to prepare breakfast. Usually, however, this is not

[1] NB. They are of the same kind as those of the Hottentots along the Great Fish River in South West Africa.